

No. Bruns. cop pension increase on ballot

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NORTH BRUNSWICK — The property tax rate would rise by 3.3 cents next year if a referendum on this November's ballot to grant township police officers a new pension plan is approved, according to Mayor Paul Matacera.

Police want to transfer from the Public Employees' Retirement System to the Police & Fireman's Retirement System, a switch which would enable public-safety workers to retire younger and draw higher pensions.

Township Business Administrator J. Paul Keller yesterday released the state Division of Pensions' projections for the cost of transferring North Brunswick police officers from the PERS to the P&FRS. It shows the township would have to pay an additional \$330,000 per year to the new pension fund. The township contributes approximately \$161,000 to the current pension plan.

Police got the referendum on the ballot by getting 10 percent of North Brunswick's registered voters to sign a pro-referendum petition.

There are two parts to the increase in the township's required contribution to the pension plan:

- The P&FRS plan would require that the township contribute an amount equal to 14.98 percent of the police payroll to the pension fund, doubling the levels of contribution mandated by the PERS plan. This increase would account for \$155,000 of the nearly \$330,000 overall increase.

- The second part requires the township to pay about \$2 million into the pension plan to bring the plan to a required level of funding so that officers currently with the force may claim the P&FRS benefits when they retire. The township plans to pay this money in 25 yearly installments, adding \$175,000 to the township's annual contribution.

The new plan also would require the officers themselves to contribute more. The officers currently contribute 3 to 8 percent of their salaries, but the P&FRS would demand contributions of 7.7 to 10.6 percent.

The officers proposed the transfer saying that a plan that paid higher benefits at an earlier retirement age would result in a younger, more vigorous force. Officer Kevin McNamara, president of Local 160 of the Policeman's Benevolent Association, which represents the officers, had no comment yesterday, pending review of the figures.

Matacera said he's neutral on the issue. He pointed out, however, that the 3.3-cent increase in the tax rate, which is \$2.51, would occur in the local-purpose fund.